THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir; vacant land near the Railway track has been encroached upon at certain places.

(b) and (c) Do not arise, as the land is required for future developmental works/ expansion of the Railways.

Proposal to check wasteful expenditure in Railways

419. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleaded to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to check the wasteful expenditure in Railways;

(b) if so, what type of expenditure are proposed to be checked; and

(c) the steps taken in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) A major part of the revenues of the Railways are spent on staff, fuel, materials, etc. for maintenance of infrastructure and operating expenses. It is a continuous endeavour of the Railways to ensure that expenditure on these areas is incurred judiciously and is kept strictly need-based. Railways, *inter-alia,* have been taking the following steps to ensure control of expenditure:—

(i) Austerity in areas of hospitality, publicity, advertisements, etc.

(ii) Better manpower management for improving *per capita* productivity.

(iii) Energy conservation.

(iv) Efficient utilisation of assets.

(v) Reduction in equipment failure and accidents.

(vi) Stringent financial and budgetary control through the mechanism of fixation of spending limits and monthly budget proportions.

(vii) Cost control, cost reduction and cost effectiveness in all on-line and off-line activities.

(viii) Zero base review of activities.

(ix) Curbing of ticketless travels, etc.

La-Nina Effect on Indian atmosphere, weather and climate

420. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the La-Nina effect on the Indian atmosphere and weather and climate, and if so, what are the details thereof;

(b) how is the La-Nina effect going to influence the Indian agriculture;

(c) is this in any way related to the El-NINO effect which is presently affecting us; and

(d) what steps are being taken to prepare the country for this effect?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) The terms "La-Nina" is used to describe abnormal cooling of waters off the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. This event occurs without any definite periodicity. Statistically it is associated with normal or favourable weather conditions over India.

(b) In the years of "La-Nina", the Indian Southwest Monsoon Rainfall is expected to be normal and this is beneficial for Indian Agriculture.

(c) El-Nino & La-Nina are both related to the sea surface temperatures of the equatorial eastern Pacific Ocean. When the sea surface temperatures are abnormally higher the situation is described as El--Nino and when they are abnormally lower the situation is called La-Nina. There is no one to one correspondence between El-Nino and Indian Summer Monsoon Rainfall.

(d) During the present Southwest monsoon season (June to September) 1998, EL-Nino conditions are likely to prevail upto July. In the event of La-Nina conditions developing after that, the influence on the monsoon rainfall if any, will be on the positive side. Since La-Nina .. not an adverse factor preparatory steps are not called for.